

1947

JEROME MYERS MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

ND237
M95W50



920
M99 W61

JEROME MYERS

Memorial Exhibition

APRIL 22 TO MAY 29, 1941


WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART



WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
10 WEST 8TH STREET • NEW YORK

ND257

M95 W50



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Metropolitan New York Library Council - METRO

JEROME MYERS

JEROME MYERS was born at Petersburg, Virginia, in 1867 and came to New York City in his eighteenth year. The picturesqueness of sections of it struck a responsive chord in his nature and he recognized at once that here was the city whose subject matter would furnish the material for his life's work. He was to leave it for intervals of short duration thereafter, but it can be truly said that it was only in this city that he felt his feet firmly on the ground.

His temperament demanded contact with life at its flow, for he was a humanist at heart and the domains in which his interests lay were where the common people of the city worked, rested, or enjoyed themselves. He was at one with them from the beginning and enjoyed nothing so much as being in their midst.

His early background was such that this subject matter was approached from the standpoint neither of the artist, tourist, or one who was out to expose the conditions under which these people lived. He sought out the life these quarters had to offer and it transformed itself into a thing of beauty as it passed through him. The charm of childhood, the venerableness of old age, the dignity of the various pursuits affording a livelihood, the pleasures indulged in after the day's work are the themes to which he recurred time upon time again. He wandered through the streets and along the waterfronts, frequented the movie houses and burlesque shows, and sat in the parks during the evenings, always with his sketch book in his hand.

Jerome Myers was adamant in his purpose of picturing all of this faithfully. He saw it as material neither to be sentimentalized over nor preached about, but as a vital living cur-

rent of which he was a part. It is in consequence of this that his observations of life are so moving in their warmth and so penetrating in their insight into character.

The earliest work by Myers is an oil sketch of a backyard done in 1887, two years after his arrival in New York City. The qualities of tenderness and directness of vision are already evident in this work and all future work evolved naturally out of it. He was to grow from but never to change his fundamental direction as exemplified in this first sketch.

Although he painted at intervals during the next twenty years he devoted most of his time to the making of drawings, pastels, watercolors and etchings, and painting did not become his major interest until his fortieth year. His first one man show of paintings took place in 1908.

In the main Jerome Myers was a self taught artist. He spent several years at the Art Students League under George DeForest Brush, but there is little evidence that this experience had any effect on his personal direction. He has recounted how certain drawings by the old masters in the school corridors were giving the lie to the instructions received in the class room, and it was not long before he was out on his own. A hurried trip to Paris proved to him that his place was back in America and that was to be his last major search for art outside of what was to be found at his own doorstep. From this time on he was to be a free agent spiritually and to follow the dictates of life and his own artistic conscience.

Jerome Myers life's work may be divided broadly into paintings, drawings, pastels and etchings of the East Side on the one hand, and numerous portraits of himself and members of his immediate family on the other. There are a few scattered canvases based upon pure fantasy. His ulti-

mate reputation as an artist will undoubtedly rest on the work pertaining to the East Side, for it is here that the abundance of material affords ample opportunity for estimating his true stature.

Myers drew constantly for a period of some fifty years and as a draughtsman leaves little to be desired. The drawings are extremely personal, entirely free from derivative or academic attributes and present themselves with the freshness of life itself. It seems to me that these qualities place him among the great draughtsmen of all time, and although contemporary estimates may have little or no bearing upon ultimate appraisals, it is without any hesitancy that I would rank him in this category.

His sense for form was sure and when this is to be found one has the center and circumference of the whole matter as far as producing form is concerned. His emphasis is rarely to be found on roundness of form within the contours, although that is wholly legitimate and must vary according to the temperament of the artist. More often than not he disregards the factor of roundness and projects a full sense of substance through means that are perplexingly simple. This aspect of form has led many to feel that his work lacks substance, where in fact there is substance in abundance and only a lack of modeled roundness.

This quality of form of which I speak, coupled with an insight into character that was penetrating in the extreme and a feeling for composition that seldom failed, has struck many of us as the predominant note in Myers' work. The poetry it contains is of the highest order and is, as it must be, a spiritual and not an intellectual product. The power it possesses is not of the slashing and obvious kind, but results from the sustained perception of truth.

Myers' paintings, pastels and etchings are in most instances at one with his drawings, in fact, the sense and direction of these drawings form the basis for his work in the various mediums. In the paintings and pastels incisive drawing is the foundation upon which he uses his color, in monochrome or from its purely decorative standpoint. As a painter he is sure in his feeling for his medium and as a colorist he is generally rich and imaginative.

The portraits form almost a special category by themselves in that the modeling is generally more rounded and full. They are varied in character and leave little doubt of his being conscious of what another great humanist had done in his own self portraits. The gallery of portraits is large and we find Myers looking at himself on many different occasions from his thirtieth year on. Not the least among his efforts at portraiture are those of his wife and daughter where the powers of characterization and plastic expression are welded into masterpieces of their kind.

Myers was cheerful by nature and possessed of a sense of humor that though warm and deep could be slyly wise or piercingly sarcastic. He loved to entertain or be entertained and gave on these occasions full vent to the playful side of his nature. He loved companionship and sought it out constantly during his latter years. He was sensitive without shyness, strong without being aggressive, and altogether of a most lovable nature to those who knew him best.

During his latter years he had become somewhat embittered because he felt his work was slowly but surely being shelved by press and public alike. "French Importations," as he was wont to call them, had taken the country by storm and he felt there was far too little attention paid to the works of outstanding American artists. When the period of satiation

with foreign work had arrived, attention was turned in the opposite direction and focused on the work of our native artists with special emphasis on the regional factor. Here again he found himself out of joint with the times, for although reams of enthusiastic praise were written on what was happening in American art his name was seldom if ever included. This was a bitter pill for one who had labored not only long and well but in truly inspired fashion, and the bitter things he had to say were absolutely justified as far as he was concerned. Personal factors were undoubtedly involved in the treatment his work received for he was one not to mince his words when an injustice had been done.

Those factors are now of the past as far as he personally is concerned and his work alone remains to receive the contemporary estimates of layman, artist and critic. It would be well for American art now and hereafter if artists of the stature of Jerome Myers were not forced to receive their just appreciation posthumously. The temper of the times had much to do with the lack of appreciation received by his work, and in all justice, this cannot be laid at any one doorstep.

The present memorial exhibition sponsored and made possible by those whose interest in American art has been ever on the alert provides us with the opportunity of reviewing the work of one of America's most authentic artists with patience or understanding as the case may be.

HARRY WICKEY.

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

The Whitney Museum of American Art wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to the following Museums and collectors who have generously contributed works as loans to this exhibition.

AMHERST COLLEGE	AMHERST, MASS.
MRS. ARTHUR H. BRIDGE	NEW YORK CITY
THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM	BROOKLYN, N. Y.
THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO	CHICAGO, ILL.
THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART	WASHINGTON, D. C.
MR. ARTHUR F. EGNER	SOUTH ORANGE, N. J.
MR. HARRY HARKNESS FLAGLER	NEW YORK CITY
MRS. VICTOR GUINZBURG	CHAPPAQUA, N. Y.
THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF HISTORY, SCIENCE AND ART	LOS ANGELES, CAL.
THE MACBETH GALLERY	NEW YORK CITY
THE MEMORIAL ART GALLERY	ROCHESTER, N. Y.
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART	NEW YORK CITY
MRS. JEROME MYERS.	NEW YORK CITY
MISS JULIA E. PECK	NEW YORK CITY
THE PHILLIPS MEMORIAL GALLERY.	WASHINGTON, D. C.
DR. HARRY SHAPIRO	NEW YORK CITY
MR. JAMES SPEYER	NEW YORK CITY

CATALOGUE

Unless otherwise designated, the works in this exhibition are lent by Mrs. Jerome Myers.

PAINTINGS

Gallery VIII

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. THE TAMBOURINE 1905
<i>Lent by Mr. James Speyer</i> | 22" x 32" |
| 2. THE NIGHT MISSION 1906
<i>Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art</i> | 25" x 30" |
| 3. CHRISTMAS DINNER 1907
<i>Lent by Mr. Arthur F. Egner</i> | 21½" x 31½" |
| 4. END OF THE WALK 1907
<i>Lent by Miss Julia E. Peck</i> | 25" x 30" |
| 5. WINDY CORNER 1907
<i>Lent by Mr. Arthur F. Egner</i> | 29" x 19" |
| 6. MADISON SQUARE CONCERT 1907
<i>Lent by The Macbeth Gallery</i> | 23" x 28" |
| 7. BAND CONCERT 1910
<i>Lent by The Phillips Memorial Gallery</i> | 13¾" x 19½" |
| 8. THE GIRLS 1916
<i>Lent by Mr. Arthur F. Egner</i> | 18" x 21" |
| 9. EVENING 1919
<i>Lent by the Department of Art, Amherst College</i> | 25" x 30" |
| 10. EVENING CIRCLE 1919 | 25" x 30" |

- | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|
| 11. SUMMER NIGHT, EASTSIDE PARK | 1919 | 25" x 30" |
| <i>Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art</i> | | |
| 12. THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE | 1919 | 25" x 30" |
| <i>Lent by Miss Julia E. Peck</i> | | |
| 13. ANGELS OF THE FIESTA | 1920 | 30" x 25" |
| <i>Lent by The Rochester Memorial Art Gallery</i> | | |
| 14. EVENING RECREATION | 1920 | 25" x 30" |
| <i>Lent by the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art</i> | | |
| 15. PARIS MARKET | 1920 | 30" x 25" |
| <i>Lent by The Phillips Memorial Gallery</i> | | |
| 16. THE END OF THE STREET | 1922 | 24½" x 29½" |
| <i>Lent by The Art Institute of Chicago</i> | | |
| 17. SEWARD PARK | About 1923 | 30" x 25" |
| <i>Lent by The Phillips Memorial Gallery</i> | | |
| 18. THE ARTIST'S WIFE | 1927 | 30" x 24" |
| 19. A NEW ENGLAND WOMAN | 1927 | 30" x 25" |
| <i>Lent by Mrs. Arthur H. Bridge</i> | | |
| 20. LIFE ON THE EAST SIDE | 1931 | 30" x 40" |
| <i>Lent by The Corcoran Gallery of Art</i> | | |
| 21. STREET SHRINE | 1931 | 39½" x 30" |
| <i>Lent by The Brooklyn Museum</i> | | |
| 22. EAST SIDE MARKET | 1936 | 25" x 30" |
| 23. STREET SCENE, NEW YORK CITY | 1936 | 25" x 30" |
| 24. AFTERNOON ON THE PIER | 1937 | 23" x 28" |

- | | | |
|------------------------|------|------------|
| 25. CITY PLAYGROUND | 1937 | 30½" x 40" |
| 26. COURTYARD | 1938 | 20" x 16" |
| 27. CAPRICE | 1939 | 30" x 40" |
| 28. SECOND AVENUE PARK | 1939 | 16" x 20" |
| 29. SELF PORTRAIT | 1939 | 13¼" x 10" |

PASTELS

Gallery IX

30. CARROUSEL
Lent by Dr. Harry Shapiro
31. HAMILTON FISH PARK
32. ITALIAN PROCESSION
33. MEDITATION
34. THE ORGAN GRINDER
Lent by Mr. Arthur F. Egner
35. THE PARK BENCH
Lent by Mr. Arthur F. Egner
36. FOLLOWING THE ORGAN
Lent by Mr. Harry Harkness Flagler
37. RECREATION PIER
Lent by Mrs. Victor Guinzburg
38. VIRGINIA

WATERCOLORS

Gallery IX

39. CENTRAL PARK CONCERT

40. THE DUET

41. FIRST AVENUE CORNER

Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

42. FOUNTAIN IN TOMPKINS SQUARE

43. GYPSIES

44. THE INTERMISSION

45. PEOPLE ON A PIER

46. THE PHOTOGRAPHER

47. PUSH CART

48. SHOPPING FOR TOYS

49. SKETCH FOR "A MEDIEVAL BALL"

50. THE SPOTLIGHT

51. STREET CAR FAMILY

52. UPPER FIRST AVENUE

53. VAUDEVILLE

DRAWINGS

Gallery X

54. AT THE LOUVRE

55. AT THE MOVIES

56. BOULEVARD MARKET, PARIS

57. CARROUSEL

58. CHILDREN AT PLAY

Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

59. HOTEL CONCERT

60. IN THE COURTYARD

61. IN THE STREET CAR

62. THE LEMON VENDOR

63. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

64. NIGHT COURT

65. ON A CROSSTOWN CAR

66. ON FIRST AVENUE

67. ON NINTH AVENUE

68. REFUGEES SLEEPING

69. ST. SULPICE MARKET

70. SELF PORTRAIT 1896

71. SELF PORTRAIT About 1912
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

72. SELF PORTRAIT About 1938

PRINTS

Gallery X

73. EN ROUTE Color Etching

74. FIRST AVENUE PARK Color Etching

75. HESTER STREET VENDOR Drypoint

76. ICE LINE Lithograph

77. NEAR TOMPKINS SQUARE Color Etching

78. OLD DOORWAY Lithograph

79. OLD HOUSE Color Etching
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

80. OLD HOUSE ON EAST 29TH STREET Color Etching

81. THE OLD QUARTER Drypoint

82. ON LUDLOW STREET Color Etching
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

83. ON NINTH AVENUE Color Etching
84. ON OAK STREET Drypoint
85. ON PITT STREET Etching
86. PURSUIT OF PLEASURE Lithograph
87. SIX WOMEN Color Etching
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art
88. SLEEPING FAMILY Etching
89. STUDIO GATE Color Etching
90. TEACHER AND CHILDREN Color Etching
91. UNDER THE ARCH Color Etching

Artist In Manhattan

by

JEROME MYERS

Published 1941

By AMERICAN ARTISTS GROUP, Inc.



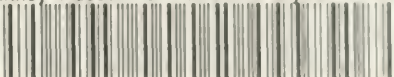
In this book Jerome Myers tells of his early childhood, his beginnings in art, the struggles which an artist of his type was forced to endure for his development, and his ideas on present-day conditions and opportunities in the field of art. The book includes 100 reproductions of his works, accompanied by the artist's own descriptions of the particular scene or occasion in Manhattan life which served as his inspiration.

Price \$3.75

PLANTIN PRESS

WHITNEY MUSEUM LIBRARY

ND237.M95 W50 STACKS
Whitney Museum of A/Jerome Myers : memor



3 2790 00031 4573



THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
IS OPEN FREE TO THE PUBLIC DAILY
FROM 1 TO 5 P. M. CLOSED MONDAYS